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RUEHBZ/AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE 0165  
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0268  
RUEHKI/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA 0278  
RUEHLC/AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE 0179  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0123  
RUEHNJ/AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA 0457  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0442  
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 0437  
RUEHGI/AMEMBASSY BANGUI 1148

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 BANGUI 000114

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/C  
PARIS FOR RKANEDA  
LONDON FOR PLORD  
AFRICOM FOR KOCH

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [CT](#)

SUBJECT: RECENT VIOLENCE AGGRAVATES SIMMERING TENSIONS IN NORTHERN CAR

REF: A. 07 BANGUI 61

[B](#). 09 BANGUI 12, 21, 46, 47, 50

[C](#). 09 NDJAMENA 173

[1](#). (SBU) SUMMARY: Increased instability and violence in the northeast of the Central African Republic (CAR) is not waiting on the rains. As the summer downpours will make the unpaved roads of the Vakaga, Bamingui-Bangoran, and the Haute Kotto prefectures impassable between July and November, Post suspects that the Patriotic Convention for Justice and Peace (CPJP), the Union of United of Democratic Forces (UFDR) and the region's various role players may feel pressured to consolidate their positions while they still can. With the illness of UFDR chief Zakaria Damane, the CPJP may see an opportunity to retake the diamond fields between Ouanda Djalle, Ouadda, and Sam Ouandja or potentially even make a move for Ndele and towards Bangui. While this should not threaten the fundamental stability of the Central African Government (CARG), it is yet another example of the CARG's lack of control over the northeast and Post remains fearful that the ethnic overtones of this conflict could lead to heretofore unseen levels of violence. The recent outbreak of fighting in Birao, however, may indicate however, that this has already begun. END SUMMARY

[2](#). (SBU) General Zakaria Damane, who led the UFDR to prominence in between 2006 and 2007, is reportedly suffering severe renal trouble, possibly as a result of kidney stones. Despite reportedly going into a possible coma for three days, Damane is said to be cut off from medical care in both Bangui and Birao, the only two options available for grave health issues in the CAR. Blocked from Bangui (a government plane reportedly landed in the village in which he is convalescing but did not pick him up), Damane also is unable to go to Birao as all roads to the town are purportedly blocked by Kara militia men. The Kara are hostile to the UFDR after a long running dispute with the Goula whose most recent manifestation was an attack on Birao with some 60 armed men aimed at the Central African military (FACA) and UFDR positions on June 6th, 2009. This follows the burning of thirty four homes in Kara dominated Delembe in response to the murder and crucifixion of a young Goula man by the Kara. Furthermore, Damane's brother was recently murdered by Kara, though it is not clear if he was targeted or killed at random as he was trying to go to Birao to get medicine for his sibling. Until now, the violence has been for economic reasons, with each side wanting control of the roads and trade, but Post fears that

the acrimony is as such that the violence may escalate the stakes.

13. (SBU) After Saturday's violence, Post received reports that the UFDR commanders were asking for Damane's permission to retaliate, and, even absent his permission, might do so anyway. This is sole source, but if true, would signify not only a dangerous shift into disorder by the UFDR, but would also open the door to overreaction by less disciplined subordinates. Also, one of the Kara columns that attacked Birao is thought to have come from the Nyala, Sudan area and, though historically intertwined, the internationalization of the conflict will do nothing to ease the situation. Overall, tensions are extremely high between the Kara and the Goula and there are signs that the Rounga and the Kara, former enemies, may be making common cause against the Goula in the name of retribution for the latter's greed post the UFDR/CARG peace agreement of April 2007 (07 BANGUI 61) .

14. (SBU) A reliable Embassy source said he recently saw what he believes to be the "missing" male population of the Rounga tribe. As previously reported, over 18,000 mostly Rounga have fled to Chad. Strikingly, over 80 per cent of these refugees are women and children. (09 BANGUI 12, 21, 46, 47, 50; 09 NDJAMENA 173) This has led to speculation among AmEmbassy Bangui staff as to the location and intentions of the male Rounga. It now appears the men, probably the core of the CPJP, have moved into the town of Sikikede. Normally a collection of small villages, Post's source saw a marked increase in the town's population. Among the recent arrivals were men in uniform, sporting new camouflage, satellite phones, and weaponry (type unknown). Though they maintain a headquarters in a school building in Sokoumba (09 BANGUI 46), and are openly present in Akoursoubak (both north of

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Ndele) such a large number of men concentrated in one location begs the question, why are they there? It could be that the CPJP is gearing for an assault either towards the Vakaga or to Bamingui-Bangoran and further south.

-- Sikikede is not far from the UFDR stronghold of Tirigulu (100km). The origins of the CPJP lie in their opposition to the Goula led UFDR and their complaints that the Goula pushed them off their diamond fields; a problem yet to be resolved.

-- More importantly, past Tirigulu are the diamond fields of the Vakaga, in the area of Ouanda Djalle and Sam Ouandja. A push before the rainy season would not only allow the Rounga to exploit the fields uninhibited for the coming few months, but it would also allow them to consolidate their defenses and/or negotiate with the Goula from a position of strength going forward. CAR diamonds are all alluvial and it is said to be easier to dig/sluice the diamonds in the rainy season when water is abundant and rivers are flowing. There are been very few large scale fights of this kind in the CAR, so while this is not probable, it remains a possibility.

-- Post received reports over the weekend that elements of the CPJP have deployed north of Ndele with motor vehicles and an unknown number of troops. While a FACA detachment has moved north, they halted thirty miles outside of the city and have not engaged the suspected CPJP column. Our well informed source speculated that the CPJP may make a move on Ndele and from there Kaga Banderu and perhaps even Bangui. It must be stressed that there has been no independent confirmation of this intention, though a source from the FACA said he thought it possible that the rebels will attempt to take Ndele. But with the government recently discussing the need to replace the highly influential mayor (and the Sultan) of Ndele (BANGUI 46), the potential exists that he may seek to strengthen his position by encouraging the rebels.

15. (SBU) The most interesting bit of RUMINT to come out the area is a report of a motorized column of some sixty French "special forces" from Chad, not/just Birao. The column was said to have been seen in February somewhere between Birao and the Chadian

border. The troops were not hostile, but refused to let their faces be photographed. (We have not determined if any photos do, in fact, exist.) While our source on this has never been wrong, we have no confirmation and it is interesting that this information was not shared with the Ambassador and only developed later. Post remains skeptical, but offers this up in the event that others may be able to confirm/deny the veracity and, perhaps more to the point, the purpose of such an incursion. Rumors and conspiracy theories abound, of course, but we cannot see any reason for a French movement of this type.

16. (SBU) COMMENT: Tensions are extremely high in the Vakaga, Bamingui-Bangoran, and the Haute Kotto prefectures. While Post has some solid sources on the happenings in the region, it is both physically and politically very far from Bangui and thus elements of the equation may well be missing. Despite this, there are some clear takeaways from rising tensions:

-- The central government has neither the will nor the capacity to be anything more than meddlesome in these events. This ensures that otherwise minor players are able to have major effects on the politics of the area and threaten the stability of the southern parts of Chad and the west of Sudan, not to mention the CAR.

-- Further violence would undoubtedly push more refugees into southern Chad, compounding the pressures upon an already overstretched UNHCR in Doha.

-- Violence and insecurity has already caused the remaining NGOs in the region to shut down until at least October 2009, compounding the root causes of alienation and a lack of development that spurred the original creation of these groups. On Saturday 6th of June, international NGOs in Ndele closed and sent their workers south. Government functionaries in the town

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have apparently done the same thing with their families.

-- The rupturing of the traditional coexistence between these groups risks creating ethnically motivated violence. The CAR has thus far been blessed by the absence of purely ethnic violence and, up until now, the hostility in the northeast been ethnically flavored but driven by economics. As the lines harden and more blood is split, Post worries that atrocities could follow.

-- Damane has no obvious successor. Should he die from his illness, his charisma and political acumen would be hard to replace and could lead to a further breakdown of an already tenuous order.

There are at least two possible scenarios: the sides will make a rush before the rains come in mid July so that they can consolidate gains over the wet months and negotiate from a position of strength. Yet at the same time, food is always in chronic shortage and the groups may plant, harvest and store food in anticipation of a fight after the rains. Post leans towards the later hypothesis, but the violence of the weekend may push the sides to early action. Regardless of the short term potential for violence, the root cause will remain and none of the involved players appear willing or able to solve them, meaning the northeast will remain an area of great concern going into 2010. END COMMENT  
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